

*Compare the establishment of communism in Russia and China and the implementation of communist domestic policies in the early years of the Stalin and Mao regimes.*

In the West during the Cold War, communism was seen as 'inimical to the free world'.<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels themselves called it a 'spectre ... haunting Europe'.<sup>2</sup> Yet the theory of communism was not as black as these pronouncements might initially indicate. Marx and Engels envisaged an uprising of workers who saw more commonalities in their status as 'proletarians' than their nationalities and would '[forcibly] overthrow all existing social conditions'<sup>3</sup> where wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of a few 'oppressing' the many, creating a system without class or national boundaries, without oppression and where 'the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'.<sup>4</sup>

Its first iteration occurred in Russia following a number of years of disquiet with Tsar Nicholas II and the privations World War I imposed. Led initially by Vladimir Lenin, and then on his death by Josef Stalin, what developed into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) became the accepted incarnation of the 'Communist Manifesto'. On its victory in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party looked naturally to the policies of the USSR for guidance. The many similarities in the implementation of communism, therefore, come from the Chinese relying on 'the Soviet model' and of the Soviets encouraging this through the supply of aid, chiefly in expertise. Where Marx and Engels envisaged the workers' uprising occurring as the natural development from the inequities in a capitalist system, in both cases the countries were in the midst of years of political upheaval with their economies crushed by war. In reality, therefore, Russia and China embarked on communism from a different starting point than the authors predicted. Rather than emerging out of the conflict between classes of a highly developed, industrialised, urban society, both countries were agrarian. To fulfil the industrial outlook of the 'Communist Manifesto' and to catch up

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<sup>1</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'The Domino Theory Principle: The President's News Conference of April 7, 1954', Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954, pp. 381-390 in Mark Kornbluh (ed.), HST306: United States History Since 1920, <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/domino.html>, accessed 30 January, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The Communist Manifesto', in W.E. Adams (ed.), *The Western World*, Vol. 2, New York, 1968, in Board of Studies NSW, *History Extension Stage 6 Source Book of Readings*, Sydney, 2000, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

to the western industrial powers, both countries wrung out the agricultural sector to pay for their rapid industrialisation.

## Preconditions to communism

While Stalin and Mao came to power under different circumstances, and at different stages of communism, they faced similar problems. Mao had been leader of the Chinese Communist Party for a number of years before defeating the Guomindang in the post-Japanese occupation years following World War II. He had to establish his government as the legitimate authority, and then implement the socialist ideal. Stalin, on the other hand, arose to power in the struggle for supremacy following Lenin's death six years after the Bolshevik revolution and thus inherited a Leninist system of government. Both countries were impoverished from war and famine, and were industrially and technologically under-developed.

The establishment of Russia as a single party state predated Stalin's rise to power, following the success of the Bolshevik (Communist) Party to grasp control after two decades of turmoil. Russia's failure to industrialise at the same rate as other European powers saw its prosperity and power decline throughout the nineteenth century, culminating in its loss of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05.<sup>5</sup> This precipitated protests from the rising middle-class, especially those who sought a less autocratic monarchy. After the 1905 Revolution, Tsar Nicholas II instituted a parliament (*duma*) voted by all males over twenty five and began to the military, agriculture and industry. The toll of World War I, however, was to fracture the relations of the Duma and military with the Tsar irrevocably, culminating with the Duma sitting against the wishes of Nicholas II and agreeing with the Chief of the General Staff, General Alexeyev, to ask for the abdication of the Tsar. After eight months' instability between the dual authorities of the Provisional Government and soviets (local councils of elected workers, soldiers and peasants) the Bolsheviks revolted and seized control of the capital, Petrograd, against little opposition. They faced tougher opposition in the Civil War

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<sup>5</sup> Joe Gauci, *IB History Route 2: Origins and Development of Authoritarian and Single Party States SL/HL*, second edition, Oxford, 2010, p. 4.

of 1918-20 against the 'Whites', but ultimately prevailed with Lenin as President and Trotsky as War Commissar. During the civil war 'War communism' was introduced, nationalising industry and agriculture, but decimating its productivity.<sup>6</sup>

With the Bolsheviks coming to power, Lenin implemented socialism across the economy. War Communism nationalised factories but reinstituted a traditional management structure after the unsuccessful initial attempts at workers' control. The Red Army seized large amounts of food to supply soldiers and workers. Money was abolished in favour of barter of food for labour. Grain stored for drought years was taken either for the army or for export,<sup>7</sup> to finance communist parties abroad. However, the peasants stopped growing crops for the plunder of the Red Army precipitating a food shortage that led to a famine responsible for up to seven and a half million deaths. Others banded together and attacked the "requisition teams", killing eight thousand soldiers in 1920.<sup>8</sup> This famine created a push migration from the cities, with up to one third of urbanites moving to rural areas. The impact on the economy was drastic: the 1921 grain harvest was half the 1913 harvest and industrial production was twenty percent of 1913's output. By mid-1922 the American Relief Administration was feeding eleven million Russians per day, as well as providing seed aid to allow the peasants to grow their way out of the famine.<sup>9</sup> This was exacerbated by the seizure by the Red Army of sixty percent of food and seventy percent of shoes.<sup>10</sup>

Protests and strikes in Moscow and Petrograd were supported by a mutiny of sailors at the Kronstadt naval base. While the Red Army quickly re-established order and the mutineers were captured and imprisoned or killed, the impact of Kronstadt was deeply felt as the sailors had been early acceptors of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. The Tenth Party Congress meeting at the time agreed with Lenin's proposals for tax reform, which became known as the New Economic Policy. Lenin admitted that the implementation of Communism had been done too swiftly in a Russia too 'backward' and struggling from the effects of war. What was needed, he said, was 'an economic breathing space'<sup>11</sup> to allow some degree of

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-25; John Laver, *The Modernisation of Russia 1856-1985*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 3-9.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin and Hitler*, New York, 2008, p. 76.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-6.

<sup>10</sup> Gauci, p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Gellately, p. 143.

exchange to be made amongst villagers. This allowed many peasants, who had been given land taken from the aristocracy, to break free of poverty. The Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary parties were banned, and former members expelled and all factions banned from the Communist Party. A new constitution in 1923 established the single-party Union of Soviet Socialist Republics made up of areas captured during the Civil War.<sup>12</sup> Laver suggests that the end of the civil war is equally responsible for the improvement in the economy.<sup>13</sup>

The rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to rule China in 1949 followed almost forty years of modernising upheaval in China. The three thousand year old Imperial Court was overthrown in the 1911 Revolution and Emperor Pu Yi abdicated in February 1912. There followed a short time of effective dictatorship under Yuan Shikai, despite parliamentary elections, and following his death in 1916 a decade of anarchical warlord rule. Throughout the 1920s, the National People's Party (Guomindang – GMD) and the emerging CCP (established 1921) worked together as the First United Front, supported by the USSR. Chiang Kai-Shek rose to the leadership of the GMD in 1925, and by defeating or dealing with the warlords, established a national government at Nanjing. Suspicious of the CCP and its increasing membership, Chiang initiated the 'White Terror', a massacre of CCP members and trade unionists in April 1927 in Shanghai and throughout the country. Japanese expansion into China 'sidetracked' domestic reform and development.<sup>14</sup>

While in power, the GMD did little to advance democracy, industrialisation or education. Chiang was criticised for continuing his attack on the CCP, even as Japan invaded Manchuria (1931) and Jehol (1933). Chiang, however, saw communism as a 'disease of the heart' where the Japanese were a 'disease of the skin'.<sup>15</sup> When Japan launched a full scale invasion in 1937, the CCP and GMD agreed to an alliance for the duration of the war. The CCP, from 1935 under the leadership of Mao Zedong, broadened its support base to four revolutionary classes: national bourgeoisie, petite bourgeoisie, peasants and industrial workers, to work

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<sup>12</sup> Gauci, pp. 8-25; Laver, pp. 3-9.

<sup>13</sup> Laver, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup> John King Fairbank & Merle Goldman, *China: A New History*, (enlarged edition), Cambridge, MA, 1998, p. 255.

<sup>15</sup> Tim Woffenden, *Three Dictators*, Melton, Vic, 2011, p. 122.

together in fighting the Japanese. The CCP's Red Army expanded thirty-fold under the Japanese occupation, and was trained in distributing propaganda and winning over the peasantry as well as in warfare. This saw membership of the CCP at 900,000 in 1945, from 22,000 in 1936.<sup>16</sup>

With the surrender of Japan, the CCP and GMD formally agreed to cooperate, while their forces were scrambling to assert control of the land, particularly in the north eastern Manchuria. At the same time Soviet troops had officially secured this area for the Allies and were busy looting Japanese built establishments. The United States had positioned Marines in Beijing in case the Soviets tried expanding their area of control and were supplying Nationalist forces in their anti-Communist campaigns.<sup>17</sup> During the civil war, Mao and his military leaders used guerrilla tactics to weaken Nationalist forces until isolating and encircling them in key battles at Shenyang, Jinan and Xuzhou before proclaiming the establishment of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949.<sup>18</sup>

## Emergence of leaders

Stalin had risen through the Bolshevik ranks to be appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party by Lenin in 1922, just before his stroke. Despite Lenin's negative assessment in his last will and testament, Stalin's ability to control Party appointments, his opponents' underestimation of him and his ability to outmanoeuvre them were key factors in Stalin consolidating power. Deutscher argued that for 'two years after the end of the Civil War Russian society already lived under Stalin's virtual rule.'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Gauci, pp. 60-68; Woffenden, pp. 115-127.

<sup>17</sup> Fairbank & Goldman, pp. 329-330.

<sup>18</sup> Woffenden, p. 127-128. Table on p. 483 of Spence suggests in August 1945 GMD 'well-armed troops' and artillery outnumbered CCP by 10:1 and 'poorly armed troops' by 13:1; by June 1948 well-armed troops and artillery numbers were even, along GMD poorly armed troops still outnumbered CCP, but only by 2:1.

<sup>19</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin*, Harmondsworth, 1966, p. 232 in Ken Webb, *Russia and the Soviet Union 1917-1941*, Sydney, 2010, p. 64.

The *Communist Manifesto* concludes with 'Workers of the world, unite!',<sup>20</sup> an internationalist exhortation that the Bolsheviks expected would see other European countries follow their lead, expressed as 'permanent revolution' by Marx and promoted by Trotsky to facilitate socialist governments in more economically advanced states who would then provide financial assistance to Russia. By the time of Stalin's accession, the immediate likelihood of this had waned. Germany had stabilised and the western Allies were thriving in the 'Roaring '20s'. In response to this, Stalin proposed the more practical doctrine of 'socialism in one country', recognising public desire for peace rather than revolution, and promoting the Soviets' ability to implement socialism without outside assistance. Politically, Stalin prospered from Lenin's reversal of his original 'democratic centralism' idea of factions within the party and although Lenin argued that when conditions changed factions would be subsequently readmitted, Stalin made much use of the 'faction' claim against his opponents. He coined 'Marxism-Leninism' to describe the political and economic ideology of the Communist Party to emphasise his continuing the work of the great idols of communism.<sup>21</sup>

Stalin's 'aims' are generally addressed less explicitly than for the other interwar dictators who established a single party state. He never wrote a *Mein Kampf* or led his party to victory in a Civil War. Stalin inherited a state that was already autocratic. His initial aim was to gain control of the Communist Party from his opponents (Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky) which took between 1924 and 1929 for Stalin to have established unquestioned control. His aims for the country were, initially, to ensure the ongoing success of socialism within the USSR and then to modernise and catch up to the western powers.

Coming from a wealthy peasant background, Mao had the benefit of being educated and understanding the countryside. He was to use this knowledge to encourage the emerging Chinese Communist Party to adapt Marxism to include the 'vast rural proletariat'.<sup>22</sup> This was further entrenched by his study which resulted in the *Report on the Peasant Movement in*

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<sup>20</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848, (unpaginated) in Modern History Sourcebook: Karl Marx: Scientific Socialism, 1844 – 1875, <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/marx-summary.asp>>, accessed 20 December 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Allan Todd and Sally Waller, *History for the IB Diploma: Authoritarian and Single-Party States*, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 26-29.

<sup>22</sup> Woffenden, p. 131.

*Hunan* (1927) which observed that peasants differed from urban industrial proletarians who could unionise for better pay and conditions. The peasants' only solution, Mao argued, was revolution. Following Chiang's White Terror and the defeat of the small CCP response, however, Mao realised that a well-organised peasant army was necessary for the revolution to be successful.<sup>23</sup> The Long March, and Mao's leadership of guerrilla tactics against the Nationalists (versus the early disastrous attempts at conventional warfare under Zhou Enlai, Otto Braun and Bo Gu) saw Mao emerge as Chairman of the CCP in 1945.<sup>24</sup> These tactics gradually weakened the Nationalists, leading to their defeat in 1949.

## Domestic policies and impact

While Stalin had the benefit of taking over an existing socialist state, it was barely subsisting. Like Lenin, Mao had to create one out of the ashes of war. Marx had broadly outlined the conditions precipitating a revolution and the communist response, but putting them into practice in countries that were not prosperous industrial powers was problematic. War had ravaged the economies, what industrial output there had been, and agriculture. Both had an identifiable enemy of the socialist state, the *kulak* and the landlord, whose land could be nationalised and 'given' to the peasants, but the subsequent produce would belong to the State to pay for the expansion of industry. This collectivisation of the countryside would also serve as a control on the peasantry. Stalin and Mao found, however, that human self-interest was a more powerful ideology than communism. Indeed, they practised it themselves.

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<sup>23</sup> Woffenden, p. 132.

<sup>24</sup> Woffenden, pp. 133-137.

## Implementation of communism by Stalin and Mao

As Stalin sought to establish himself as Lenin's successor, he emphasised the incongruity of the NEP with ideological communism, and criticised Trotsky's plan for improving light industry and Bukharin for allowing the kulaks to get rich. With Soviet agriculture falling behind western countries, he said in a speech in December 1927, it was time to bring together all the small farms into a network of collective cultivation. Throughout this time, Stalin emphasised the ongoing revolution to establish socialism and that opponents, both within and outside the USSR, were taking measures to combat their success. Show trials and reaction to foreign 'threats' kept this in the public realm.<sup>25</sup>

The first Five Year Plan was predicated on becoming more technically and economically advanced than the western capitalist democracies and thus proving the superiority of communism. This first plan was to increase production, particularly in heavy industry, to raise living standards and access to education, health services and welfare, and to move many of these new ventures out of the potentially vulnerable western European areas, to the Asian side of the Ural Mountains.<sup>26</sup> Sixty new towns were built in this first five years. The irony was that imported (chiefly American) transport and engineering companies were needed to set up these factories and build the towns. This was paid for by exporting the excess grain that would be produced under the new, efficient, collectivised farms. As Dziewanowski points out, this was wildly optimistic however, as it anticipated a 150 percent increase in food production while collectivising only twenty five percent of agricultural land.<sup>27</sup> The aims of collectivisation were threefold: to ensure a cheap food supply to the cities; to free up the peasants for the factories as agriculture increasingly mechanised; and to politicise and control the rural populations while they funded the industrial revolution and military rearmament.<sup>28</sup>

Collectivisation had its roots in the response to the NEP, which provided a loophole for black marketeering. Especially in times of shortages and rationing, men would buy food from

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<sup>25</sup> Gellately, p. 162.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>27</sup> M.K. Dziewanowski, *A History of Soviet Russia and its Aftermath*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1997, pp. 174-175.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.



farmers at a higher price than that offered by the state and then sell it in the city at a profit. In a trip to Siberia in 1928, Stalin decided that a key part of the agricultural problem was the farmers' cultivation of small plots. Economies of scale in big collective farms would see efficiency and productivity increase, especially as they could afford modern machinery. By November 1929, approximately thirty percent of farms had been collectivised, almost wholly by poor farmers. The kulaks, those who had made money under NEP, stayed out of the collectivisation process.<sup>29</sup> Lenin had previously defined a kulak as a farmer who had hired labour and more land and horses than he needed to support his family, as distinct from a 'middle peasant' who had just enough land to feed his family with one or two horses or a 'poor peasant' with little or no land or horses.<sup>30</sup>

Stalin's solution to kulak reluctance was 'eliminating the kulaks as a class ... An offensive requires that we smash the kulaks ... strike so hard as to prevent them from ever again rising to their feet.'<sup>31</sup> Quotas were set, so that within six months all kulaks would have been categorised and either executed, sent to concentration camps or dispossessed and relocated onto poor land. An identified 'kulak' would be levied a household tax on top of the already onerous taxes, usually payable within twenty-four hours. Upon non-payment, the farm would be raided by the Committee of Poor Peasants and the local militia, the farm confiscated, and the farmer deported.<sup>32</sup> These dekulakisation brigades frequently met resistance from the kulaks and violently suppressed any opposition; their confiscation of property was more akin to looting, and in areas where achieving quotas were in jeopardy, anything that could be perceived as a status symbol, an item of worth or even just an accusation was enough for families to be beaten and deported. 'Anyone could be labelled a kulak, from the person who lent neighbours money to one who kept a tidy garden.'<sup>33</sup> 337,563 families were dekulakised in 1930,<sup>34</sup> even after Stalin published the 'Dizzy with Success' article, claiming fifty percent of farms collectivised and the overfulfilling of the goals of the Plan, and that 'the radical turn of the countryside toward Socialism may be

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<sup>29</sup> Gellately, pp. 167-169.

<sup>30</sup> Dziewanowski, p. 175.

<sup>31</sup> Gellately, pp. 169-170.

<sup>32</sup> Dziewanowski, p. 176.

<sup>33</sup> Gellately, p. 63.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 169-173.

considered achieved.<sup>35</sup> This 'success' saw a slowing of collectivisation and dekulakisation<sup>36</sup>, a consolidation of the rapid change already enacted and reaction to the hastily planned first Five Year Plan,<sup>37</sup> but food shortages in 1931 saw the introduction of rationing (although peasants, 80% of the country, were excluded<sup>38</sup>) and the increase of quotas due to a doubling in urbanisation, which lead in 1932 to further raids to find allegedly hoarded grain.

It is difficult to accurately record how many people died as a result of the 1932-33 famine, owing to poor and corrupted Soviet records, that not all deaths were recorded, that premature deaths from conditions caused by the famine occurred in future years and that the effects of famine and dekulakisation overlapped. Estimated mortality as a result of the famine is from four to seven million people. Five million people were dekulakised between 1929 and 1933.<sup>39</sup> Wider impacts were that horse and cow populations halved and sheep numbers were a third in 1934 compared to 1928 (from 32 million, 60 million and 97 million, respectively).<sup>40</sup>

On a collectivised farm ('*kolkhoz*'), produce was first paid at fixed, below market, rates to the Motor Tractor Station for machinery provided by the State at high, fixed prices. The *kolkhoz* then filled its grain quota to the State at fixed, low rates, reserved another portion for seed, fodder, reserve stock and then finally paid its peasants at a daily rate, regardless of quality. This system did little to motivate quality labour on the *kolkhoz* but everything to encourage 'lavish' attention on their household plots, such that these were just three percent of the land yet provided close to fifty percent of meat, milk and green vegetables for home consumption or trade.<sup>41</sup>

Human cost and long term damage to the Soviet agricultural sector notwithstanding, the success of the State owned and collectivised farms at providing the Government with produce to sell internationally and to feed the cities and towns allowed incredible industrial growth under the first two Plans. These plans had three key industrial objectives: to expand

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<sup>35</sup> Gellately, p. 174.

<sup>36</sup> Yet dekulakisation kept occurring so that by 1938, 94% of all agricultural land was controlled by the State. In 1928, 96% of land had been privately owned. (Dziewanowski, p. 178.)

<sup>37</sup> Laver, p. 104.

<sup>38</sup> Gellately, p. 228.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

<sup>40</sup> Dziewanowski, p. 178.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

and modernise current industries; to construct and develop entirely new industries; and develop new, strategically defensible, industrial centres away from the vulnerable western and southern borders.<sup>42</sup>

Early successes of the First Five Year Plan saw the Sixteenth Party Congress (1930) boast of the 'Five Year Plan in four years'<sup>43</sup> but gradually problems emerged. Central planners often had no understanding of the requirements either of new technologies imported from overseas or of the employees to work them. Machines were sent to factories too small or lacking essential facilities to operate them. Workers were untrained and unable to operate complex machines, unable to read the manuals and oftentimes broke the machinery or injured themselves working under duress to meet quotas (usually based on US production figures, then inflated due to the 'superiority' of the Soviet worker and system).<sup>44</sup> Workers were encouraged with schemes like the 'Socialist competition of labour' with titles and medals, but also material and monetary prizes.<sup>45</sup>

By the end of 1932, the First Five Year Plan had seen machine and electric equipment increase by 157 percent (above expectations), the establishment of the aviation, plastics and synthetic rubber industries and the building of industrial centres in the Urals and Siberia. Failures under the Plan were iron and steel production (only 62% of planned production), coal was fifteen percent short and perhaps most pointedly, the quality of manufactured goods was terrible.

The Second Five Year Plan (1933-1937) aimed to address the shortcomings evident from the first Plan, complete industrialisation across the whole economy and take consideration of Japanese expansion into China (Manchuria) and Hitler's rise to Chancellor and subsequent Nazi takeover of German government. Consequently, the second Plan saw an increasing and professionalising of the Red Army, with troop numbers tripling, increasing tank production and strategy and its first parachute units. Automotive production focused on tanks and armoured cars rather than civilian transport. By the pronounced completion of the second Plan, the Soviet industrial revolution had consolidated coal, steel and electricity and

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

established viable industries 'indispensable to any great power' in automobiles, aeroplanes, plastics and chemicals.<sup>46</sup>

Like Russia at the end of its civil war, by the time of Mao's proclamation of the People's Republic of China, the country had been decimated by the impact of Japanese occupation, the civil war and the GMD's inability to adequately manage the economy. At the end of the war, the transfer from Japanese control to original owners took months rather than days, the robbing of property was widespread (including by senior officers of the Nationalist army and police) and the yuan was worth different values in different cities.<sup>47</sup> Unemployment was exacerbated by the reduction of war industries and demobilisation of soldiers.

Unemployment was between eight percent in Shanghai and thirty percent in Nanjing. The most critical economic issue, however, was inflation. The GMD response was to print more money, with typically disastrous results: from the end of WWII (September 1945), prices had increased by a factor of five by February and fourteen by September 1946, and by thirty by February 1947. Industrial strike was rife, with 1716 strikes in 1946 in Shanghai alone. The CCP took advantage of these conditions by having members join unions and attain positions of responsibility or influence and placed in factories, utilities providers and department stores.<sup>48</sup> The government responded by guaranteeing wages would be pegged to a cost of living index, but such was the rate of inflation, the workers were always behind and employers complained the cost of labour was making them uncompetitive. The government's next tactic was wage and price controls, but hoarding and companies refusing to produce at unrealistically low prices soon saw such a lack of supply that inflation again hit.<sup>49</sup> By August, 1948, a sack of flour was 21.8 million yuan, up from 1.95 million in June, and from twelve yuan in 1937. This rampant hyperinflation precipitated a new currency, with one gold yuan replacing three million 'fabí' yuan.<sup>50</sup> The central bank limited the printing of the new currency, citizens were compelling to trade gold and silver for the new yuan, price increases were forbidden and taxes were raised to try to limit the budget deficit.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>47</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, second edition, New York, 1999, p. 460.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 474.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 475-476.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 477.

These measures were quickly seen to be futile and prices escalated to four hundred times their price of six months ago; shopkeepers either closed their doors or returned to barter.<sup>51</sup>

Despite a military victory over the Nationalists, the Chinese Communist Party still did not control all of China. At the local level, there were remained pro-GMD elites or rebels, or those who had professed neutrality during the civil war in order to avoid post-war repercussions. They felt it anyway. One and a half million troops of the People's Liberation Army swept the countryside for subversives, killing two to three million and imprisoning the same number by the end of 1951, when official statistics stopped being taken.<sup>52</sup> These killings were performed in public to further terrorise the local populace. Those areas which were squeamish about public executions were told by Mao, 'This situation must change.'<sup>53</sup> Within the PLA itself were a number of ex-GMD officers who had defected. These became the target of an internal purge, with twenty two thousand identified as criminals. Twelve percent of these were condemned to immediate or delayed death sentences and twenty eight percent to exile.<sup>54</sup> Chang and Halliday suggest that Mao probably would have had more killed, but for their use as slave labour. Such was the treatment and conditions in the mines and wastelands that they suggest up to twenty seven million prisoners were worked to death, executed or chose to escape the *lao-gai* ('reform through labour') by committing suicide.<sup>55</sup>

During the civil war, Mao had courted land owners by stopping the slogans of land redistribution and the reduction of rent and interest. While this swung some land holders against the GMD, they were quickly to rue their trusting of Mao. Agrarian reform was swift and brutal as three hundred thousand party activists swept from north to south, establishing new local communist elites, summarily executing or exiling to concentration camps any suspected of owning land or being a counterrevolutionary. As with dekulakisation, this was a chance for local vendettas to be enacted.<sup>56</sup> It also bought the

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 477-480.

<sup>52</sup> Alexander V. Pantsov, with Steven I. Levine, *Mao: The Real Story*, New York, 2012, pp. 391-392.

<sup>53</sup> Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, London, 2005, p. 337.

<sup>54</sup> Pantsov, p. 392.

<sup>55</sup> Chang and Halliday, p. 338.

<sup>56</sup> Pantsov, p. 392.

support of millions of peasants for whom land ownership was a psychological boost, and brought economic security.<sup>57</sup>

After establishing control of the countryside from both a security and economic perspective, Mao turned his attention to the urban elite. The CCP had been forced to keep many GMD bureaucrats on the public service payroll. With two million jobs and only 750,000 members of the Party (not all suited to governance) they had no choice.<sup>58</sup> In December 1951, Mao launched the Sanfan (Three Anti) and Wufan (Five Anti) campaigns.

The Sanfan campaign targeted embezzlement, waste and 'bureaucratism'. The campaign against embezzlement was a result of the widespread corruption under the GMD and was supported by the public. With confessions and informing as the main strategy for uncovering the corrupt, quotas to meet and competitions for catching the most, torture was widely used to encourage the flow of information. While only a small number of thieves were uncovered, 'from now on, few dared to pilfer state funds.'<sup>59</sup>

The campaign against waste was, paradoxically, more of a waste of human and material resources than it saved. Chang and Halliday give the example of a Belgian priest who was interrogated by three or four people at a time for over three thousand hours in the course of three years: with paper wasted in interview transcripts that unveiled no useful information.<sup>60</sup> The campaign against bureaucratism was intended to take power from government employees (at this point, still many from the GMD days) and union officials and as far as possible put it in the hands of the workers. Despite initial evaluations, this was largely unsuccessful.<sup>61</sup>

Like the Three Antis, the Five Anti campaign was successful in terrorising productive members of society and driving three hundred thousand to suicide.<sup>62</sup> It was established to abolish bribery, tax evasion, stealing state property, cheating and stealing economic information. It extorted money from businessmen who had not had their property

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<sup>57</sup> Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography*, Stanford, CA, 1999, p. 241.

<sup>58</sup> Todd and Waller, p. 133.

<sup>59</sup> Chang and Halliday, p. 341.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341-342.

<sup>61</sup> Jackie Sheehan, *Chinese Workers: A new history*, London, 1998, pp. 41-44.

<sup>62</sup> Chang and Halliday, p. 342.

confiscated and dissuaded them from bribing state officials who might be convinced to look elsewhere.<sup>63</sup> Terrill suggests the money raised was to pay for the Korean War.<sup>64</sup>

Despite Western fears of the spreading of communism as a single, united movement, Stalin was no real friend of the new People's Republic of China. Certainly he provided Mao with a requested five year \$US300 million loan at only one percent *per annum* interest for the development of the Chinese economy. But then he demanded that much of this be spent on buying Soviet weaponry for fighting the Korean War, which upset the Chinese government who thought they were fulfilling their duty as a communist brother to the USSR. Only fifty of 147 industrial proposals had been approved by the Soviet government at the time of Stalin's death in March 1953.<sup>65</sup> Stalin kept encouraging his Chinese counterparts not to hurry the pace of industrialisation and modernisation, whether in light of the problems he had encountered, or because the Chinese were targeting a twenty percent annual growth rate where he had achieved only 18.5 percent (officially: western statistics suggest closer to twelve percent). Finally, the Chinese were forced to accept a target of 14.7 percent.<sup>66</sup>

The death of Stalin saw a battle to be his successor between Georgii Malenkov, Lavrentii Beria and Nikita Khrushchev. Two days after Stalin's funeral, Zhou Enlai and the Chinese delegation to the funeral met the Soviet leaders. Seeking Mao's support, and afraid he might turn his back on the USSR as Yugoslavia had, they agreed to greater cooperation and the Soviets building electricity stations in China.<sup>67</sup> Two months later, they agreed to provide documentation and equipment for the construction of almost one hundred factories as well as expediting work on those projects already approved.

Mao initially proposed a ten to fifteen year 'or a little longer' timeframe for the industrialisation and full implementation of socialism across China. Internal dissent and manoeuvring saw the suggestion of more conservative targets: 'a protracted period of time', 'a fairly long period of time' and the finally announced the goal to 'gradually accomplish a

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Terrill, p. 247.

<sup>65</sup> Pantsov, p. 390.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 390-391.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 401.

step by step implementation' on 10 February 1954.<sup>68</sup> In September, Khrushchev convinced the Praesidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to contribute to the implementation of the 'forthcoming Five Year Plan for the socialist industrial development of China.'<sup>69</sup>

The Five Year Plan for 1953-1957 was adopted on 30 July 1955, and announced the construction of 694 infrastructure and industrial complexes that would then be the basis of developing China's heavy and defence industries.<sup>70</sup>

As Mao had admitted that he needed to follow the Soviet model due to the lack of Chinese expertise, it is unsurprising that he announced a 'Five Year Plan' focusing on infrastructure and heavy industry. This first Five Year Plan began a process of infrastructure development that continued through the twentieth century, with considerable increases in the ability of rail, road, air and river traffic to service the country. In addition to its economic importance, Ho reminds his reader that this infrastructure also enhances the military's ability to mobilise its forces should the need arise.<sup>71</sup> Other infrastructure projects were concerned with limiting flooding in affected areas or increasing the irrigation basin of rivers.<sup>72</sup>

While Soviet financial aid contributed only three percent of a total fifty billion yuan invested in the Five Year Plan, their technical support was invaluable. The Soviets provided technical information and expertise worth 'at least hundreds of millions of dollars on the world market'<sup>73</sup> and roughly twenty five thousand students, workers, specialists and advisors either went to the USSR for training or visited China. The Soviets also provided the Chinese with a model for financing urban industrialisation from the agricultural sector.<sup>74</sup> Fifty eight percent of capital investment went to heavy industry, compared with forty one percent in the Soviets' first Five Year Plan and only nineteen percent in the United States between

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 403-407.

<sup>69</sup> Konstantin Koval, 'J.V. Stalin's Negotiations with Zhou Enlai in 1952 and N.S. Khrushchev's with Mao Zedong in 1954' (in Russian), in *Novaia I Noveishaia istoriia (Modern and Contemporary History)*, no. 5, 1989, pp. 104-107, in *ibid.*, p. 409.

<sup>70</sup> Pantsov, p. 411.

<sup>71</sup> Alfred K. Ho, *China's Reforms and Reformers*, Westport, CT, 2004, pp. 54-55.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>73</sup> Pantsov, p. 412.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.



1880 and 1912.<sup>75</sup> This over-capitalisation in industry was one factor that precipitated agricultural disaster.

One key, often overlooked, aspect of agricultural reform in post-revolutionary China was the expansion of available arable land to farmers. Despite the Chinese traditional reverence for deceased ancestors, Mao ordered the digging up of graves and the future cremation of deceased. Additionally, sides of mountains were terraced for farmland and trees planted on steeper slopes to reduce soil erosion and a future timber supply. Apart from creating land, and therefore jobs, for farmers, the projects themselves created millions of jobs over the first decade or so of Party rule.<sup>76</sup> Farmland was taken from its owners and distributed to the peasants at the rate of about one third of an acre per farmer.<sup>77</sup> Typically, however, this simplistic solution created complex problems. Where previously landlords would supply seed, fertiliser and equipment, and then organise the sale of the crop, newly independent peasant-farmers needed to fend for themselves without capital, equipment, expertise or markets. The government's measures to counteract these issues included providing about thirty to forty percent of farms with mechanics and heavy equipment, supplying seed and marketing the crops.<sup>78</sup>

From 1953 to 1956 Mao declared a 'war on peasants.'<sup>79</sup> While he wanted to limit the peasants' grain ration to 110 kilograms per year, others convinced him that it be 200 kilograms, still well under subsistence levels. Few ever received this amount, and resorted to eating sweet potato leaves (usually food for pigs) and even tree bark.<sup>80</sup> Driving this fleecing of the countryside was Mao's determination to become a superpower and develop the capability of producing nuclear bombs. Quotas were set according to how much money Mao needed, not based on what was likely or achievable.<sup>81</sup>

In January 1956, Mao drafted a twelve year plan for agriculture. Again the starting point for harvest figures was the money Mao wanted. The target was to triple the highest previous ever harvest (in 1936), with little state expenditure or investment. Zhou Enlai and Liu

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<sup>75</sup> Terrill, p. 247.

<sup>76</sup> Ho, pp. 56-57.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Chang and Halliday, title of chapter 37, pp. 409-420.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 409-410.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 414-415.

Shaoqi, emboldened by Khrushchev's recent public condemnation of Stalin's record of death and terror, and gossiping among themselves of the failure of the Soviet Union to feed its population, stood up to Mao and were able to extract concessions on his agricultural policy and superpower timeline.<sup>82</sup>

The Chinese government's adherence to the Soviet example saw the introduction of collectivisation between 1956 and 1958. Under collectivisation, farmers were paid wages according to a point system. Quotas and prices were set by the bureaucracy.<sup>83</sup> Collectivised farms also closed a loophole whereby farmers could under-report their harvest figures: 'once you join the collective, you only get the food the government doles out to you.'<sup>84</sup>

In what was to be the 'Great Leap Forward' of China's development beyond its competitors, state farms were converted to communes of about five or six thousand families, divided into two or three brigades of approximately two thousand, and further divided into teams of thirty families.<sup>85</sup> These communes took over an individual's ownership and control of their work, home, personal possessions, even their food. Meals were taken at communal canteens, with food apportioned on merit. Provided in insufficient quantities, it became 'a weapon to force people to follow the party's every dictate.'<sup>86</sup> The Great Leap Forward was a disaster, precipitating a famine which killed from fifteen to thirty two million people.<sup>87</sup> From 1961, private plots were allowed for the growing of additional freely-chosen crops for private consumption or sale. Ho calls this 'the beginning of the free-enterprise and free-market system in China.'<sup>88</sup> Staple products such as rice, meat, vegetable oil and sugar were controlled by the command system, but others such as fruit, vegetables and eggs were left to the free-market system to provide.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 415-417.

<sup>83</sup> Ho, p. 57.

<sup>84</sup> Unnamed peasant in Chang and Halliday, p. 411.

<sup>85</sup> Ho, p. 57.

<sup>86</sup> Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe 1958-62*, London, 2010, p. ix.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

## Culture

Terror only works to an extent. A much less polarising strategy for proselytising the populace is through the use of the arts and education to reinforce state ideology. Both leaders attempted to bring these social realms into the fold of propagating socialist iconography and philosophy. The worker/soldier/peasant hero replaced the previous great imperial heroes of the past, or the artist would find himself exiled to be 're-educated.'

### Arts

Like every other aspect of output in Russia, literature become 'cultural output' and was planned by the Party. Rather than fiction or poetry, the biographies of 'shock workers'<sup>90</sup> or documentaries of collectivised farms in Uzbekistan described the universal success and support of socialism, led by 'the great genius of humanity'.<sup>91</sup> By 1932, all branches of the arts had its own centralised union, which met frequently to discuss production strategy and targets. Non-members were unable to write, produce or perform.<sup>92</sup> In 1934, 'socialist realism' was proclaimed as the only permitted mode of artistic expression. Socialist realism was described as representing life 'in the process of becoming the ideal' or of depicting 'the heroic struggle of the world proletariat ... the victory of socialism, and the great wisdom and heroism of the Communist Party'.<sup>93</sup> It needed to be simple and to have a great hero who was an exemplary worker, Communist and victorious against saboteurs or enemy spies.<sup>94</sup> For the most part, then, literature was reduced to the exultation of Stalin or the dialogue of slogans by shallow characters. Visual arts glorified the regime through portrayals of happy, healthy shock workers and their families on a State farm or of the 'Red Army man', usually for propaganda or education uses. Plays and movies not deemed appropriate were stopped mid-run or while in production. Other movies were commissioned to celebrate great Russian heroes of the past (Peter the Great, Alexander Nevsky and others).<sup>95</sup> History was rewritten so that all events were precursors to the Bolshevik Revolution, and contrary to the

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<sup>90</sup> "Those who consistently exceeded the prescribed work norm", Dziewanowski, p. 202.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.202.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201-203.

<sup>93</sup> Unnamed, unsourced 'official definition', in *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>94</sup> Dziewanowski, pp. 203-204.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

socioeconomic driving forces of Marxist theory, historical research and teaching centred on the Great Man.<sup>96</sup>

The Chinese Communist Party followed Stalin's edicts on the arts from the early 1930s, criticised by the 'most revered' Lu Xun's composition of the perfect Soviet poem:

Oh, steam whistle!  
Oh Lenin!<sup>97</sup>

Once in power, artists and writers were expected to show 'correct thinking' and support the Party's principles. When they expressed frustration with the strictures placed on them, such as Hu Feng's remarks in 1955 that the use of Marxism to judge art was 'not based on reality' and 'can stifle ... creativity',<sup>98</sup> charges of counterrevolutionary activities and prison followed.<sup>99</sup> While some revolutionary operas were created in the early years of communist government under the National Opera Reform Committee,<sup>100</sup> Mao was concerned that they still reflected imperialist themes rather than socialist heroes of peasant, worker or soldier.<sup>101</sup> Visual art was transformed from highly skilled watercolour landscapes to mundane oil-based templates of Mao portraits or of the Chairman visiting factories or farms.<sup>102</sup>

## Education

The first Soviet Five Year Plan started with an emphasis on the 'polytechnical school' which would prepare students for life in the workforce through the 'project method' and sending students into the community. Allied to this was a twenty percent increase in schools and a forty percent increase in students. Yet by 1931, the project method was already dismissed

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Spence, p. 354.

<sup>98</sup> Merle Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, Cambridge, 1967, p. 131, in Spence, p. 538.

<sup>99</sup> Until 1979 in Hu Feng's case. *Ibid.*, pp. 538-539.

<sup>100</sup> Woffenden, p. 155.

<sup>101</sup> Stefan R. Landsberger (ed.), 'Model Operas (Yangbanxi)', *Chinese Posters*, Chinese Posters Foundation, <http://chineseposters.net/themes/model-operas.php>, accessed 24 January 2013.

<sup>102</sup> Woffenden, pp. 156-157.

as a 'hair-brained scheme'.<sup>103</sup> The textbook was reaffirmed as the primary teaching tool and State approved textbooks issued, with inspections to ensure teachers adhered to its message. One former teacher interviewed by Boobbyer expressed her horror that communist propaganda was used as examples for grammar rules ('all this is the achievement of the Soviet state') and she would give some dissenting opinion as an aside, but still had to teach as 'remarkable' what she knew to be wrong or bad writing as the students would be penalised in examinations as they progressed to higher institutions unless she taught to the required script.<sup>104</sup>

Few children in China were educated before 1900, and the situation improved only a little with the establishment of western (US and British) foundation and missionary schools in the early twentieth century, albeit this become a pathway to move on to western universities and slowly widened the educated professional class.<sup>105</sup> In 1949, twenty five percent of primary age, three percent of secondary age and only one third of one percent of the immediate post-secondary age group attended university.<sup>106</sup>

Mao's aims in education policy were thus to reduce illiteracy and western influences, to increase knowledge in useful scientific and technical disciplines to advance agriculture, industry and defence, to decrease the education divide between urban and rural and to bring about a countrywide understanding of Mao Zedong thought.<sup>107</sup> This was achieved through the nationalisation of schools by 1952, implementing the Soviet model (including translating Soviet textbooks and recruiting Russian teachers) and the adoption of Russian as the official second language. For most students, Mandarin was just as foreign a language as Russian, due to the linguistic diversity throughout China. Part-work schools were perhaps the most successful at getting students to attend; based around the need for students' labour at home, these schools closed or ran on restricted hours at peak agricultural times.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Philip Boobbyer, *The Stalin Era*, New York, 2000, p. 137-138.

<sup>104</sup> Tatiana Khodorovch, interview with Philip Boobbyer, Paris, March 1997, in *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>105</sup> Woffenden, p. 178.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

## Ideology: Stalinism vs Maoism

In comparing what came to be called Stalinism and Maoism, it is important to consider that while Stalinism is post-revolutionary, 'the thought of Mao Zedong' spent twenty years developing before the success of the revolution. Stalin already had a functioning communist state; the revolution had been won, but barely implemented. To him fell the responsibility to consolidate the world's first communist state. Mao, on the other hand, had not just Marxist theory, but the example of Lenin and Stalin in ways to build support, win the revolution and establish a communist system. Indeed, Mao admitted in 1958 that without experience or experts China 'had to copy from foreign countries, and having copied we were unable to distinguish good from bad.'<sup>109</sup>

Where Lenin tried to implement the Marxian ideal of a workers' state, Stalin drove the Soviet Union into becoming a bureaucratic state of 'conservative social policies' run by the post-revolutionary elite.<sup>110</sup> Meisner quotes Markovic's assessment of Stalin as a 'counter-revolutionary character' as he stopped any socialist social change in order to establish a professional bureaucracy as a class above the workers and peasants.<sup>111</sup> Freedom to question, criticise or form factions within the Communist Party was forbidden and punished, in disregard of Lenin's 'inner-party democracy' principle. While publicly professed, communist social goals were suppressed in favour of state ownership and the establishment of a command economy at the greatest speed, regardless of social cost. This is achieved through a combination of rule by terror and cult of personality. In fact, Meisner calls the move to Stalinism 'the death of the revolution'.<sup>112</sup>

The development of a distinct Maoist philosophy came as a response to Stalin's attempted intervention in China to curb excessive revolutionary activities in 1927. It was in the 'Report of an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan' that Mao expressed that China's socialist revolution would come from the peasant movement and would overthrow the

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<sup>109</sup> Mao Zedong, 'Talk at the Chengtu Conference', in Schram (ed.), *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1966, pp. 98-99 in Maurice Meisner, 'Stalinism in the history of the Chinese Communist Party', in Arif Dirlik, Paul Healy and Nick Knight, *Critical Perspectives on Mao Zedong's Thought*, New Jersey, 1997, p. 191.

<sup>110</sup> Meisner, p. 186.

<sup>111</sup> Mihailo Markovic, 'Stalinism and Marxism', in Robert C. Tucker (ed.) *Stalinism: Essays in Interpretation*, New York, p. 301, in Meisner, p. 187.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

gentry. This idea of an agrarian peasant revolution is a further development on communist thought from those of Marx, Lenin and Stalin, what Mao called a 'sinification of Marxism'.<sup>113</sup>

## Conclusion

Ultimately, both rulers failed to implement a true socialist utopia. Perhaps the bonds of nationalism are too strong to unite workers of the world. Despite the unprecedented carnage of World War I, it has since been proven that capitalism had not yet reached its limit in either 1917 or 1949. In both countries, it is indicative that the small private plots of farmers were far more productive per acre than the great collectivised farms.

After admittedly copying Soviet policy in the first years of the People's Republic, Mao endeavoured to 'sinify' communism to China's circumstances, culminating in the Great Leap Forward. The disastrous results from this pushed Mao back towards a more Stalinist command economy over the remainder of his term as Chairman, albeit with some scope for free enterprise for non-essential food.<sup>114</sup> Like Stalin, and despite his antagonism towards bureaucracy, Mao would not or could not devise a liberal democratic system of government that reflected Marx's 'self-government of the producers'.<sup>115</sup> Mao quickly suppressed any small democratic freedoms initiated. 'Maoism was thus a Janus-faced phenomenon, marked and marred by a profound incongruity between its progressive socioeconomic accomplishments and its retrogressive Stalinist political features.'<sup>116</sup>

For Meisner, the key point of difference between Stalin and Mao is the former's conservatism and the latter's radicalism and repeated attempts at 'permanent revolution'. Initially feeling forced into copying the Soviet model by dint of lack of expertise or experience, Mao personified Einstein's famous definition of stupidity: he did the same things as Stalin, and got the same results. Where Mao differed, however, was that he saw his comrades', and China's, decline into bureaucratic comfort and stagnation and moved to re-fire the revolution. The problem, however, was that the Soviet-styled system was already

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

in place by the time Mao realised this. The new bourgeoisie, those with bureaucratic power rather than wealth, had a status quo to protect. Mao's call for a permanent revolution died amongst the self-interest of the CCP apparatchiks. The tension, perhaps even the sense of failure, Mao must have felt within himself is identified by Meisner in that he was 'both the principal creator of the Chinese Communist bureaucracy and its principal critic' that it failed to deliver a socialist state.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.



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